# Putting the Squeeze on Mac Files

By Kevin M. Savetz

If you use a Macintosh to access a bulletin board system, the Internet or a commercial online service, you're bound to come across file names that end with the letters .sit or .cpt. These extensions correspond to StuffIt and Compact Pro, the two most common compression systems in the Mac world.

*StuffIt Lite*, developed by Aladdin Systems, Inc. (165 Westridge Dr., Watsonville, CA 95076; 408-761-6200, voice), is a $25 shareware program that allows you to compress and decompress .sit files. It's simple to use and relatively fast. There's also a commercial version of the product, called *StuffIt Deluxe* (about $65 mail order), as well as *StuffIt Expander*, a free program that expands (but can't compress) archives.

*Compact Pro's* .cpt archives are also prevalent online. Produced by Cyclos Software (P. O. Box 31417, San Francisco, CA 94131-0417, 415-821-1448, voice), *Compact Pro* is also a $25 shareware program ($35 if you want a disk sent to you).

Functionally similar to *StuffIt Lite*, the program seems to work a little more slowly but does a good job compressing files. Other compression programs, such as *Disk Doubler* (you'll occasionally see its dd extension online), are fine products but have never gained wide acceptance in the online world.

Which program should you use? It's a matter of choice. I prefer *StuffIt*, because it's a little more friendly and robust than *Compact Pro*. It's also able to decompress any *Compact Pro* archives that I've come across. *StuffIt Deluxe* can also decompress other compression systems, including ZIP files from PCs. Then again, I know people who swear by *Compact Pro*. Try them both out and decide for yourself.

On the Internet, you can find *StuffIt Lite* via anonymous ftp at **mrcnext.cso.uiuc.edu:/pub/info-mac/Compress-Translate/stuffit-lite-307.hqx** and *Compact Pro* at **mrcnext.cso.uiuc.edu:/pub/info-mac/Compress-Translate/compact-pro-15.hqx**. Both programs are also available on AOL and other online services.

Strangely enough, *PKZIP*, the compression program standard in the DOS world, is virtually unheard of to Mac users. A version of *PKZIP* for the Mac is available from Ascent Solutions (10460 Miamisburg-Springboro Pike, Dayton, OH 45342, 513-885-2031, voice), but it shows no signs of ever gaining acceptance in the Macintosh community. The $54.95 program's features are abysmal, the interface is pathetic and—worst of all—I couldn't even get it to compress the files that I asked it to compress.

## .Sea Shells

If you come across a file with the extension .sea, you've found a self-extracting archive. These are programs that, when run, automatically decompress themselves. The good news is that you don't have to worry about which program created the archive, since you won't need a special program to decompress it. The bad news is that the code that makes an archive self-extracting adds 15 to 20K to the size of a regular, non-self-extracting archive, so it takes a little longer to download.

Just as in the PC world, certain types of files can compress more than others. Applications and text files compress well, but .GIF files, sounds and printer fonts, among others, hardly compress at all.

*PKZIP*-compatible capabilities. The program, which retails for $29, ( Nico Mak Computing, Inc., P. O. Box 919, Bristol, CT 06011-0919; 800-242-4775 or 713-524-6394, voice), provides you with a point-and-click interface for viewing, running, extracting, adding or deleting files in archives. The latest version, *WinZip 5.5*, includes a feature that makes it easy to install and uninstall software distributed in ZIP files. *WinZip* runs the installation program in a ZIP file, gives users a chance to try the program, and then offers to restore the system to its original state. The uninstall process can remove all traces of any new files, icons or program groups.

*WinZip* also supports ARJ, LZH (produced by LHA) and ARC files via external programs.

A shareware evaluation version of *WinZip 5.5* can be downloaded from the IBMSYS Forum on CompuServe as well as from many bulletin board systems. To order *WinZip*, call (800) 242-4775, voice, or type **GO SWREG** on CompuServe and follow the menus to register product #402. *WinZip* requires *Microsoft Windows 3.1* or *Windows for Workgroups*. OA